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SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR ON KOSOVO AND ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN

REF: SECSTATE 169481

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) President Tadic is working to maintain calm in Kosovo and to prevent any misunderstanding with the international community regarding any potential redlines, President Tadic's foreign policy advisor, Jovan Ratkovic, told the Ambassador on December 26. Ratkovic said that the draft Kosovo resolution currently with parliament was the best deal that the Democratic Party could get from the Democratic Party of Serbia and would not hamper Serbia's EU aspirations or possible membership in NATO. Ratkovic said President Tadic was energized by the ongoing presidential campaign, but realized it would be a difficult fight for reelection. End Summary.

Serbia is Engaging Positively in Kosovo

¶2. (SBU) Ambassador delivered reftel points December 26 to President Tadic's foreign policy advisor, Jovan Ratkovic. Ratkovic responded by emphasizing that President Tadic was encouraging Serbs to remain in Kosovo and would work with the international community to address "practical issues". Ratkovic said the GOS was not encouraging ethnic Serbs to leave Kosovo, and to do so would be against Serbia's interest in Kosovo. He said the GOS was actually placing a heavy emphasis on assisting Serb enclaves, such as with infrastructure projects, because it wanted to encourage Serbs to stay in Kosovo for the long term. Ratkovic said Tadic would not instigate separatism in Bosnia, but said remarks from U.S. officials advocating the creation of "a one Bosnia idea" (e.g. without a separate Republika Srpska entity) would not be helpful. Ratkovic said he would deliver reftel points to President Tadic, who has been on the campaign trail and attended the parliament session on Kosovo today, and left open the possibility that Serbia would reciprocate with revised points in the future.

Parliament to Consider Kosovo Resolution Today

¶3. (SBU) Ratkovic said President Tadic's Democratic Party (DS) and Prime Minister Kostunica's Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) had intensely negotiated the wording of the draft Kosovo resolution currently with parliament. He emphasized that the DS believed that the negotiated DS-DSS draft language would not tie Serbia's hands with regard to signing a Stabilization and Accession Agreement (SAA) with the EU nor would it limit any eventual decision on NATO membership. Ratkovic said the draft was "the best the DS could get" out of the DSS, and that it was a major improvement from the "completely unacceptable" draft that the DSS had initially submitted to the DS. He said the initial DSS version would have "prevented for good" Serbia's ability to join NATO and would have effectively

halted Serbia's move towards EU integration. Ratkovic said the DSS may have been trying to "stain" Tadic's foreign policy record by submitting the initial draft and threatening not to adopt a softer version, but ultimately, the prospect of Serbia's eventual membership in the EU was still popular among Serbian citizens so the DSS compromised. Ratkovic said he expected the Assembly to vote on the Kosovo resolution late on December 26.

Tadic is in Full Campaign Mode

14. (SBU) Ratkovic said the presidential election campaign, which started on December 22, was going better than expected, but he thought it would ultimately be a tight race against the Radicals. Ratkovic said Tadic began the campaign very tired, but the president was a natural campaigner who was quickly becoming energized. He said Republika Srpska Prime Minister Dodik's recent public support for Tadic was a good boost to the campaign. In contrast, French President Sarkozy's and U.K. Prime Minister Brown's comments regarding Kosovo and Serbia after the recent EU Summit had been untimely and unhelpful to President Tadic, he said. Ratkovic said that throughout the campaign Tadic would emphasize Kosovo, as well as, Serbia's future within Europe.

Comment

15. (SBU) On behalf of President Tadic, who is already hitting the campaign trail, Ratkovic accepted the list of potential redlines regarding Kosovo but said the items should be further discussed in the future. In the near term, Ratkovic appeared confident that parliament would pass the draft compromise language for the Kosovo resolution and that Serbia's long term interests in Euro-Atlantic integration would not suffer. Post will follow up on the resolution upon its passage to see if Ratkovic's optimism holds true and what

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effect, if any, it will have on the ongoing presidential campaign.
End comment.

MUNTER